AMENDED IN SENATE JULY 27, 2003

AMENDED IN SENATE JULY 8, 2003

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 16, 2003

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 1, 2003

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 10, 2003

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2003-04 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1382

Introduced by Assembly Member Correa

February 21, 2003

An act to amend Sections 7071.17, 7085.5, 7085.6, 7090.1, 7099.2, 7121, 7122.1, and 7143 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to contractors.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1382, as amended, Correa. Contractors: arbitration, civil penalties, and licensing.

(1) Existing law, the Contractors' State License Law, provides for licensing and regulation of contractors by the Contractors' State License Board. Existing law establishes an arbitration process administered by the board to resolve disputes between contractors and consumers. The failure of a contractor to comply with an arbitration award results in the automatic suspension of the contractor's license by operation of law within 30 days following notification of the contractor by the board, and results in revocation of the license after one year in the absence of a reinstatement request made by the contractor upon

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complying with the arbitration award. Existing law provides a similar license suspension and revocation process relative to a contractor who fails to pay a civil penalty or comply with an order of correction or an order to pay a specified sum to an injured party in lieu of correction.

This bill, in both of the situations described above, would instead provide for the revocation of the license within 90 days, but would authorize the registrar of the board, for good cause, to delay the revocation for not more than one year.

(2) Existing law authorizes an arbitrator to grant any remedy or relief deemed just and equitable and within the scope of the board's referral to the arbitrator and the requirements of the board, including specific performance of a contract as well as monetary damages.

This bill would delete the authority of an arbitrator to order specific performance of a contract but would specify that it would not prevent an arbitrator from awarding a complainant all direct costs and expenses for the completion or repair of the project.

(3) Existing law requires the board to pay the expenses of one expert witness in an arbitration proceeding upon the request of either party.

This bill would require the board to pay those expenses only if the case involves workmanship issues.

(4) Existing law provides that a contractor who refuses to pay a final court judgment or final arbitration award relative to failing to pay a contractor, consumer, materials supplier, or employee must file a judgment bond with the board that is sufficient to guarantee payment of the judgment, in order for the contractor to be licensed.

This bill would revise these provisions and make other related changes.

(5) Existing law authorizes the board to assess a civil penalty not exceeding \$2,000 upon its licensees for specified violations of the Contractors' State License Law.

This bill would increase the amount of this civil penalty up to \$5,000.

(6) Existing law prohibits any person whose license was denied, revoked, or suspended who had knowledge and participated in the acts for which the license was denied, revoked or suspended, from serving as a member, officer, director, or associate of a licensee.

This bill would exempt from this prohibition a person whose license was denied for failure to document sufficient satisfactory experience for a supplemental classification for an existing license.

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(7) Existing law prohibits a partner or managing officer or employee from disassociating himself or herself from a license after receiving a citation in order to avoid complying with the citation.

This bill would instead prohibit a partner or managing officer or employee from disassociating himself or herself from a license after an act or omission that resulted in a citation in order to avoid complying with the citation.

(8) Existing law allows a suspended contractor's license to be renewed only as an inactive license and prohibits a contractor from engaging in licensed activity until the license is reinstated.

This bill would instead authorize the renewal of an expired license which has been suspended as an active license but would prohibit a contractor with a suspended license from engaging in any activity relating to the license until the license is reinstated.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

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1 SECTION 1. Section 7071.17 of the Business and Professions

2 Code is amended to read: 3

7071.17. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the board shall require, as a condition precedent to accepting an

application for licensure, renewal, reinstatement, or to change

officers or other personnel of record, that an applicant, previously

found to have failed or refused to pay a contractor, subcontractor, 7

8 consumer, materials supplier, or employee based on an unsatisfied

final judgment, file or have on file with the board a bond sufficient

to guarantee payment of an amount equal to the unsatisfied final judgment or judgments. The applicant shall have 90 days from the

date of notification by the board to file the bond or the application

13 shall become void and the applicant shall reapply for issuance,

14 reinstatement, or reactivation of a license. The board may not

15 issue, reinstate, or reactivate a license until the bond is filed with

16 the board. The bond required by this section is in addition to the 17

contractor's bond. The bond shall be on file for a minimum of one year, after which the bond may be removed by submitting proof 18

of satisfaction of all debts. The applicant may provide the board 19

with a notarized copy of any accord, reached with any individual

holding an unsatisfied final judgment, to satisfy a debt in lieu of

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filing the bond. The board shall include on the license application for issuance, reinstatement, or reactivation, a statement, to be made under penalty of perjury, as to whether there are any 4 unsatisfied judgments against the applicant on behalf of 5 contractors, subcontractors, consumers, materials suppliers, or the 6 applicant's employees. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if it is found that the applicant falsified the statement then the license will be retroactively suspended to the date of issuance and 9 the license will stay suspended until the bond, satisfaction of judgment, or notarized copy of any accord applicable under this 10 11 section is filed.

- (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all licensees shall notify the registrar in writing of any unsatisfied final judgment imposed on the licensee. If the licensee fails to notify the registrar in writing within 90 days, the license shall be automatically suspended on the date that the registrar is informed, or is made aware of the unsatisfied final judgment. The suspension shall not be removed until proof of satisfaction of the judgment, or in lieu thereof, a notarized copy of an accord is submitted to the registrar. If the licensee notifies the registrar in writing within 90 days of the imposition of any unsatisfied final judgment, the licensee shall, as a condition to the continual maintenance of the license, file or have on file with the board a bond sufficient to guarantee payment of an amount equal to all unsatisfied judgments applicable under this section. The licensee has 90 days from date of notification by the board to file the bond or at the end of the 90 days the license shall be automatically suspended. In lieu of filing the bond required by this section, the licensee may provide the board with a notarized copy of any accord reached with any individual holding an unsatisfied final judgment.
- (c) By operation of law, failure to maintain the bond or failure to abide by the accord shall result in the automatic suspension of any license to which this section applies.
- (d) A license that is suspended for failure to comply with the provisions of this section can only be reinstated when proof of satisfaction of all debts is made, or when a notarized copy of an accord has been filed as set forth under this section.
- (e) This section applies only with respect to an unsatisfied final judgment that is substantially related to the construction activities

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of a licensee licensed under this chapter, or to the qualifications, functions, or duties of the license.

- (f) Except as otherwise provided, this section shall not apply to an applicant or licensee when the financial obligation covered by this section has been discharged in a bankruptcy proceeding.
- (g) Except as otherwise provided, the bond shall remain in full force in the amount posted until the entire debt is satisfied. If, at the time of renewal, the licensee submits proof of partial satisfaction of the financial obligations covered by this section, the board may authorize the bond to be reduced to the amount of the unsatisfied portion of the outstanding judgment. When the licensee submits proof of satisfaction of all debts, the bond requirement may be removed.
- (h) The board shall take the actions required by this section upon notification by any party having knowledge of the outstanding judgment upon a showing of proof of the judgment.
- (i) For the purposes of this section, the term "judgment" also includes any final arbitration award where the time to file a petition for a trial de novo or a petition to vacate or correct the arbitration award has expired, and no petition is pending.
- (j) The qualifying person and any member of the licensee or personnel of the licensee named as a judgment debtor in an unsatisfied final judgment shall be automatically prohibited from serving as an officer, director, associate, partner, owner, qualifying individual, or other personnel of record of another licensee. This prohibition shall cause the license of any other existing renewable licensed entity with any of the same personnel of record as the judgment debtor licensee to be suspended until the license of the judgment debtor is reinstated or until those same personnel of record disassociate themselves from the renewable licensed entity.
- (k) For purposes of this section, a cash deposit may be submitted in lieu of the bond.
- (*l*) Notwithstanding subdivision (f), the failure of a licensee to notify the registrar of any unsatisfied final judgment in accordance with this section is cause for disciplinary action.
- 36 SEC. 2. Section 7085.5 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:
 - 7085.5. Arbitrations of disputes arising out of cases filed with or by the board shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules:

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(a) All "agreements to arbitrate" shall include the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the parties to the dispute, the issue in dispute, and the amount in dollars or any other remedy sought. The appropriate fee shall be paid by the board from the Contractors' License Fund.

- (b) (1) The board or appointed arbitration association shall appoint an arbitrator in the following manner: immediately after the filing of the agreement to arbitrate, the board or appointed arbitration association shall submit simultaneously to each party to the dispute, an identical list of names of persons chosen from the panel. Each party to the dispute shall have seven days from the mailing date in which to cross off any names to which it objects, number the remaining names to indicate the order of preference, and return the list to the board or appointed arbitration association. If a party does not return the list within the time specified, all persons named in the list are acceptable. From among the persons who have been approved on both lists, and in accordance with the designated order of mutual preference, the board or appointed arbitration association shall appoint an arbitrator to serve. If the parties fail to agree on any of the parties named, if acceptable arbitrators are unable to act, or if, for any other reason, the appointment cannot be made from the submitted lists, the board or appointed arbitration association shall have the power to make the appointment from among other members of the panel without the submission of any additional lists. Each dispute shall be heard and determined by one arbitrator unless the board or appointed arbitration association, in its discretion, directs that a greater number of arbitrators be appointed.
- (2) In all cases in which a complaint has been referred to arbitration pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 7085, the board or the appointed arbitration association shall have the power to appoint an arbitrator to hear the matter.
- (3) The board shall adopt regulations setting minimum qualification standards for listed arbitrators based upon relevant training, experience, and performance.
- (c) No person shall serve as an arbitrator in any arbitration in which that person has any financial or personal interest in the result of the arbitration. Prior to accepting an appointment, the prospective arbitrator shall disclose any circumstances likely to prevent a prompt hearing or to create a presumption of bias. Upon

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receipt of that information, the board or appointed arbitration association shall immediately replace the arbitrator or communicate the information to the parties for their comments. Thereafter, the board or appointed arbitration association shall determine whether the arbitrator should be disqualified and shall inform the parties of its decision, which shall be conclusive.

- (d) The board or appointed arbitration association may appoint another arbitrator if a vacancy occurs, or if an appointed arbitrator is unable to serve in a timely manner.
- (e) (1) The board or appointed arbitration association shall provide the parties with a list of the times and dates, and locations of the hearing to be held. The parties shall notify the arbitrator, within seven calendar days of the mailing of the list, of the times and dates convenient to each party. If the parties fail to respond to the arbitrator within the seven-day period, the arbitrator shall fix the time, place, and location of the hearing. An arbitrator may, at the arbitrator's sole discretion, make an inspection of the construction site which is the subject of the arbitration. The arbitrator shall notify the parties of the time and date set for the inspection. Any party who so desires may be present at the inspection.
- (2) The board or appointed arbitration association shall fix the time, place, and location of the hearing for all cases referred to arbitration pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 7085. An arbitrator may, at the arbitrator's sole discretion, make an inspection of the construction site which is the subject of the arbitration. The arbitrator shall notify the parties of the time and date set for the inspection. Any party who desires may be present at the inspection.
- (f) Any person having a direct interest in the arbitration is entitled to attend the hearing. The arbitrator shall otherwise have the power to require the exclusion of any witness, other than a party or other essential person, during the testimony of any other witness. It shall be discretionary with the arbitrator to determine the propriety of the attendance of any other person.
- (g) Hearings shall be adjourned by the arbitrator only for good cause.
- (h) A record is not required to be taken of the proceedings. However, any party to the proceeding may have a record made at

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its own expense. The parties may make appropriate notes of the proceedings.

- (i) The hearing shall be conducted by the arbitrator in any manner which will permit full and expeditious presentation of the case by both parties. Consistent with the expedited nature of arbitration, the arbitrator shall establish the extent of, and schedule for, the production of relevant documents and other information, the identification of any witnesses to be called, and a schedule for any hearings to elicit facts solely within the knowledge of one party. The complaining party shall present its claims, proofs, and witnesses, who shall submit to questions or other examination. The defending party shall then present its defenses, proofs, and witnesses, who shall submit to questions or other examination. The arbitrator has discretion to vary this procedure but shall afford full and equal opportunity to the parties for the presentation of any material or relevant proofs.
- (j) The arbitration may proceed in the absence of any party who, after due notice, fails to be present. The arbitrator shall require the attending party to submit supporting evidence in order to make an award. An award for the attending party shall not be based solely on the fact that the other party has failed to appear at the arbitration hearing.
- (k) The arbitrator shall be the sole judge of the relevancy and materiality of the evidence offered and conformity to legal rules of evidence shall not be required.
- (*l*) The arbitrator may receive and consider documentary evidence. Documents to be considered by the arbitrator may be submitted prior to the hearing. However, a copy shall be simultaneously transmitted to all other parties and to the board or appointed arbitration association for transmittal to the arbitrator or board appointed arbitrator.
- (m) The arbitrator shall specifically inquire of the parties whether they have any further proofs to offer or witnesses to be heard. Upon receiving negative replies, the arbitrator shall declare the hearing closed and minutes thereof shall be recorded. If briefs are to be filed, the hearing shall be declared closed as of the final date set by the arbitrator for the receipt of briefs. If documents are to be filed as requested by the arbitrator and the date set for their receipt is later than that set for the receipt of briefs, the later date shall be the date of closing the hearings. The time limit within

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which the arbitrator is required to make the award shall commence to run, in the absence of other agreements by the parties, upon the closing of the hearings.

- (n) The hearing may be reopened on the arbitrator's own motion.
- (o) Any party who proceeds with the arbitration after knowledge that any provision or requirement of these rules has not been complied with, and who fails to state his or her objections to the arbitrator in writing, within 10 calendar days of close of hearing, shall be deemed to have waived his or her right to object.
- (p) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), any papers or process necessary or proper for the initiation or continuation of an arbitration under these rules and for any court action in connection therewith, or for the entry of judgment on an award made thereunder, may be served upon any party (A) by regular mail addressed to that party or his or her attorney at the party's last known address, or (B) by personal service.
- (2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), in all cases referred to arbitration pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 7085 in which the contractor fails or refuses to return an executed copy of the notice to arbitrate within the time specified, any papers or process specified in paragraph (1) to be sent to the contractor, including the notice of hearing, shall be mailed by certified mail to the contractor's address of record.
- (q) The award shall be made promptly by the arbitrator, and unless otherwise agreed by the parties, no later than 30 calendar days from the date of closing the hearing, closing a reopened hearing, or if oral hearing has been waived, from the date of transmitting the final statements and proofs to the arbitrator.

The arbitrator may for good cause extend any period of time established by these rules, except the time for making the award. The arbitrator shall notify the parties of any extension and the reason therefor.

- (r) (1) The arbitrator may grant any remedy or relief that the arbitrator deems just and equitable and within the scope of the board's referral and the requirements of the board. The arbitrator, in his or her sole discretion, may award costs or expenses.
- 38 (2) The amendments made in paragraph (1) during the 39 2003–04 Regular Session shall not be interpreted to prevent an

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arbitrator from awarding a complainant all direct costs and expenses for the completion or repair of the project.

- (s) The award shall become final 30 calendar days from the date the arbitration award is issued. The arbitrator, upon written application of a party to the arbitration, may correct the award upon the following grounds:
- (1) There was an evident miscalculation of figures or an evident mistake in the description of any person, things, or property referred to in the award.
- (2) There is any other clerical error in the award, not affecting the merits of the controversy.

An application for correction of the award shall be made within 10 calendar days of the date of service of the award by serving a copy of the application on the arbitrator, and all other parties to the arbitration. Any party to the arbitration may make a written objection to the application for correction by serving a copy of the written objection on the arbitrator, the board, and all other parties to the arbitration, within 10 calendar days of the date of service of the application for correction.

The arbitrator shall either deny the application or correct the award within 30 calendar days of the date of service of the original award by mailing a copy of the denial or correction to all parties to the arbitration. Any appeal from the denial or correction shall be filed with a court of competent jurisdiction and a true copy thereof shall be filed with the arbitrator or appointed arbitration association within 30 calendar days after the award has become final. The award shall be in writing, and shall be signed by the arbitrator or a majority of them. If no appeal is filed within the 30-calendar day period, it shall become a final order of the registrar.

- (t) Service of the award by certified mail shall be effective if a certified letter containing the award, or a true copy thereof, is mailed by the arbitrator or arbitration association to each party or to a party's attorney of record at their last known address, address of record, or by personally serving any party. Service may be proved in the manner authorized in civil actions.
- (u) The board shall pay the expenses of one expert witness appointed by the board when the services of an expert witness are requested by either party involved in arbitration pursuant to this article and the case involves workmanship issues that are itemized

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in the complaint and have not been repaired or replaced. Parties who choose to present the findings of another expert witness as evidence shall pay for those services. Payment for expert witnesses 4 appointed by the board shall be limited to the expert witness costs 5 for inspection of the problem at the construction site, preparation of the expert witness' report, and expert witness fees for appearing or testifying at a hearing. All requests for payment to an expert witness shall be submitted on a form that has been approved by the 9 registrar. All requests for payment to an expert witness shall be 10 reviewed and approved by the board prior to payment. The registrar shall advise the parties that names of industry experts may 12 be obtained by requesting this information from the registrar.

(v) The arbitrator shall interpret and apply these rules insofar as they relate to his or her powers and duties.

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- (w) The following shall apply as to court procedure and exclusion of liability:
- (1) The board, the appointed arbitration association, or any arbitrator in a proceeding under these rules is not a necessary party in judicial proceedings relating to the arbitration.
- (2) Parties to these rules shall be deemed to have consented that judgment upon the arbitration award may be entered in any federal or state court having jurisdiction thereof.
- (3) The board, the appointed arbitration association, or any arbitrator is not liable to any party for any act or omission in connection with any arbitration conducted under these rules.
- SEC. 3. Section 7085.6 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:
- 7085.6. (a) (1) The failure of a licensee to comply with an arbitration award rendered under this article shall result in the automatic suspension of a license by operation of law.
- (2) The registrar shall notify the licensee by certified mail of the failure to comply with the arbitrator's award, and that the license shall be automatically suspended 30 calendar days from the date of that notice.
- (3) The licensee may appeal the suspension for noncompliance within 15 calendar days after service of the notice by written notice to the registrar.
- (4) Reinstatement may be made at any time following the suspension by complying with the arbitrator's award and the final order of the registrar. If no reinstatement of the license is made

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 within 90 days of the date of the automatic suspension, the license and any other contractors' license issued to the licensee shall be automatically revoked by operation of law for a period to be determined by the registrar pursuant to Section 7102.

- (5) The registrar may delay, for good cause, the revocation of a contractor's license for failure to comply with the arbitration award. The delay in the revocation of the license shall not exceed one year. When seeking a delay of the revocation of his or her license, a licensee shall apply to the registrar in writing prior to the date of the revocation of the licensee's license by operation of law and state the reasons that establish good cause for the delay. The registrar's power to grant a delay of the revocation shall expire upon the effective date of the revocation of the licensee's license by operation of law.
- (b) The licensee shall be automatically prohibited from serving as an officer, director, associate, partner, or qualifying individual of another licensee, for the period determined by the registrar and the employment, election, or association of that person by another licensee shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action. Any qualifier disassociated pursuant to this section shall be replaced within 90 days from the date of disassociation. Upon failure to replace the qualifier within 90 days of the disassociation, the license of the other licensee shall be automatically suspended or the qualifier's classification removed at the end of the 90 days.
- SEC. 4. Section 7090.1 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:
- 7090.1. (a) (1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, the failure to pay a civil penalty, or to comply with an order of correction or an order to pay a specified sum to an injured party in lieu of correction once the order has become final, shall result in the automatic suspension of a license by operation of law 30 days after noncompliance with the terms of the order.
- (2) The registrar shall notify the licensee in writing of the failure to comply with the final order and that the license shall be suspended 30 days from the date of the notice.
- (3) The licensee may contest the determination of noncompliance within 15 days after service of the notice, by written notice to the registrar. Upon receipt of the written notice, the registrar may reconsider the determination and after reconsideration may affirm or set aside the suspension.

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(4) Reinstatement may be made at any time following the suspension by complying with the final order of the citation. If no reinstatement of the license is made within one year of the date of the automatic suspension, the cited license and any other contractors' license issued to the licensee shall be automatically revoked by operation of law for a period to be determined by the registrar pursuant to Section 7102.

- (5) The registrar may delay, for good cause, the revocation of a contractor's license for failure to comply with the final order of the citation. The delay in the revocation of the license shall not exceed one year. When seeking a delay of the revocation of his or her license, a licensee shall apply to the registrar in writing prior to the date of the revocation of the licensee's license by operation of law and state the reasons that establish good cause for the delay. The registrar's power to grant a delay of the revocation shall expire upon the effective date of the revocation of the licensee's license by operation of law.
- (b) The cited licensee shall also be automatically prohibited from serving as an officer, director, associate, partner, or qualifying individual of another licensee, for the period determined by the registrar, and the employment, election, or association of that person by a licensee shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action. Any qualifier disassociated pursuant to this section shall be replaced within 90 days of the date of disassociation. Upon failure to replace the qualifier within 90 days of the prohibition, the license of the other licensee shall be automatically suspended or the qualifier's classification removed at the end of the 90 days.
- SEC. 5. Section 7099.2 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:
- 7099.2. (a) The board shall promulgate regulations covering the assessment of civil penalties under this article which give due consideration to the appropriateness of the penalty with respect to the following factors:
 - (1) The gravity of the violation.
- (2) The good faith of the licensee or applicant for licensure being charged.
 - (3) The history of previous violations.
- (b) Except as otherwise provided by this chapter, no civil penalty shall be assessed in an amount greater than five thousand

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1 dollars (\$5,000). A civil penalty not to exceed fifteen thousand 2 dollars (\$15,000) may be assessed for a violation of Section 7114 3 or 7118.

- 4 SEC. 6. Section 7121 of the Business and Professions Code 5 is amended to read:
- 6 7121. Any person who has been denied a license for a reason other than failure to document sufficient satisfactory experience for a supplemental classification for an existing license, or who has 9 had his or her license revoked, or whose license is under suspension, or who has failed to renew his or her license while it 10 11 was under suspension, or who has been a member, officer, director, 12 or associate of any partnership, corporation, firm, or association 13 whose application for a license has been denied for a reason other 14 than failure to document sufficient satisfactory experience for a supplemental classification for an existing license, or whose 15 16 license has been revoked, or whose license is under suspension, or who has failed to renew a license while it was under suspension, 17 and while acting as a member, officer, director, or associate had knowledge of or participated in any of the prohibited acts for 19 20 which the license was denied, suspended, or revoked, shall be 21 prohibited from serving as an officer, director, associate, partner, 22 or qualifying individual of a licensee, and the employment, 23 election, or association of this type of person by a licensee shall 24 constitute grounds for disciplinary action.
 - SEC. 7. Section 7122.1 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:
 - 7122.1. Notwithstanding Section 7068.2 or any other provision of this chapter, the disassociation of any qualifying partner, responsible managing officer, or responsible managing employee from a license after the act or omission has occurred that resulted in a citation pursuant to Section 7099 shall not relieve the qualifying partner, responsible managing officer, or responsible managing employee from responsibility for complying with the citation. Section 7122.5 shall apply to any qualifying partner, responsible managing officer, or responsible managing employee of a licensee that fails to comply with a citation after it is final.
- 37 SEC. 8. Section 7143 of the Business and Professions Code 38 is amended to read:
- 39 7143. A license that is suspended for any reason which 40 constitutes a basis for suspension under this chapter, is subject to

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expiration and shall be renewed as provided in this chapter, but this

- renewal does not entitle the licensee, while the license remains
- 3 suspended, and until it is reinstated, to engage in any activity to
- which the license relates, or in any other activity or conduct in violation of the order or judgment by which the license was
- 6 suspended.